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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

25X1 TO : Director of Training [redacted]
 VIA : Deputy Director of Training (G) *pe*
 25X1 FROM : [redacted]

DATE: 20 August 1953

SUBJECT: Conference on "The Problem of Soviet Imperialism," School for Advanced International Studies, at the Sheraton Park Hotel, 10-14 August, 1953

1. I originally asked for permission to attend this conference partly to review and bring up to date my own knowledge of the subject, but also to get an impression of the caliber of the speakers and of the administration of the SAIS. I believe that the school succeeded in presenting an accurate panorama of the state of Soviet Studies in the United States today (with the help of several especially well informed Europeans). Such a picture is always rather depressing, revealing as it must how few Americans have grasped the implications of the whole Russian imperialistic expansion, largely I think because we are so reluctant to understand how any group of people can plan such a diabolical and eventually self-destructive program.

2. As is always the case with such conferences, the atmosphere was somewhat synthetic; the quality of the speeches was variable, a few stimulating almost no response in the way of questions or discussion, but others producing more than could be handled in the allotted time. I had the feeling that some of the speakers with good reputations based on their writings would not have been included if their poor platform manner had been foreseen. Some of the men were too tied down to their manuscripts, which I suppose is to be expected where the subject matter tends to be controversial and the address is to be printed later; spontaneity suffers where a large audience is expected to be critical.

3. I have kept notes of the men who made a favorable impression, and a few who distinctly did not. I propose to summarize for our files whatever further opinions are submitted by others who attended, in an effort to draw some conclusions concerning speakers who may be useful to us in the future for whatever seminars or lectures we may be able to set up internally.

4. I feel that such conferences are primarily valuable as training to those people who learn more from the spoken word than from books. The speakers who presented a few salient facts vividly did more to provoke discussion than those who tried to cover a whole subject in thirty minutes. In several cases the discussion leaders were better than the principal speakers; and in general the State Department men were better informed and presented their material more effectively than the university professors.

5. Many of the questions revealed the typical American weakness for wanting a quick, practical answer, and corresponding impatience at complexities requiring long study. So many showed very little historical perspective; they demanded an immediate solution, not a policy for a generation to come.

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6. But admitting that such symposia are bound to show uneven results in quality, I feel that they are valuable to the students in getting them away from the accepted attitudes of their own personal surroundings, and forcing them to recognize diverse approaches to current problems, - the very thing the Russians do not want their people to do. I hope that the SAIS succeeds in working out a similar program on Africa for next summer, as is being thought of, and goes on from there. I think that this conference must have done the school a lot of good, even though the attendance was limited to people who were already familiar with the school for the most part.

B.B.W.